

Rev. Derek Fairman

Mary, Mother of God (Spiritual Mother)

This day we celebrate Mary's greatest title, the Mother of God. Being the Mother of God raises Mary to heights beyond the cherubim and seraphim, the highest angelic beings. Being the Mother of God brings Mary the greatest joy, and the Lord invites us to rejoice with her.

This last homily on Mary, the New Eve, is about spiritual motherhood. In the beginning, Eve was called the mother of all the living. Eve has a special place in humanity, as its kind of primordial "home," where everything began. For Eve, the title of mother of all the living was a vocational title: she did not live up to that title, even though she was present at the beginning. She passed on physical life, but spiritual death as well through her original sin. Eve had to watch as her original sin, which she passed on to Cain and Abel, resulted in Cain killing Abel. Besides having to endure watching one of her sons kill the other, she also died, which is ironic since she is mother to all the living.

In the Virgin Mary, Eve's title of mother of the living is fulfilled. The Virgin Mary conceived the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit. The Virgin Mary is the one who bore Life Itself. She is the Mother of Life and Light. The Virgin Mary surpasses Eve's title of being the mother of all the living by virtue of being the Mother of God. However, Mary's motherhood did not stop at being the Mother of the Lord Jesus.

The Word of God is the One through whom all things were made. He is Son of God and Son of Mary. Now the Lord Jesus comes to dwell in our hearts. The Lord Jesus who dwells in our hearts is the same Lord Jesus through whom all things were made, and whose Mother is Mary; when He comes into our hearts, He is the same Word that He has always been. Therefore, the Virgin Mary is our spiritual Mother, because she is the Mother of the Word who dwells within our hearts now. Mary is also our spiritual mother because she is the Mother of our spiritual Life, and she is the Mother of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church.

This Motherhood was established whenever the Lord Jesus came down from Heaven, but it was sealed at the foot of the Cross. There, the Lord Jesus told His Mother about St. John the Evangelist, "Woman, behold, your son," and to St. John the Evangelist, "Behold, your mother." This title of Woman recalls Eve. The Lord Jesus explained to His Mother that she would now care for St. John the Evangelist, and by extension, all the Apostles. By further extension, she would now take care of all the disciples.

This was foretold in Psalm 87. Psalm 87 is a psalm that recognizes the city of Jerusalem as a mother to the Israelites. Usually the city of Jerusalem, called Zion, is portrayed as a daughter, but in Psalm 87, Zion is called Mother. Those Jewish people living outside of the Holy Land could still look to Jerusalem as a mother, especially when they would go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Temple. The Jewish people could find a spiritual home in Jerusalem no matter how far away they lived.

The fulfillment of Psalm 87 is often seen fulfilled in the Church, in which the baptized find a home. However, the Virgin Mary is also a kind of place in which we find a home, in which Psalm 87 is fulfilled in a human being. The Virgin Mary was there at the beginning of the Church, and the Church is perfected in her. After the Apostles ran away from the Lord during His Passion and Death, when they came back together, they came back to her. The Virgin Mary was in prayer with the Apostles and other disciples on Pentecost morning.

Mary's spiritual motherhood is not just related to the way in which the Word of God is born in the souls of the faithful. Mary's spiritual motherhood is also concerned with the way in which that seed of the Word grows and bears fruit. As any mother sees to the growth and development of her children, so the Mother of God helps us to let the Word of God grow in our hearts. The Mother of God helps us to be better disciples, and to let the Word of God bear fruit, thirty and sixty and one hundred-fold.

How do we make sure that the Word of God bears fruit? By pondering over the Word of God that has come to us, and by seeing our lives with the eyes of faith, as Mary did. In the Gospel passage, we heard that Mary kept all the things that were happening within her heart, pondering what they might mean. We can pray over the Scripture passages that we hear on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, letting them sink into our hearts throughout the week. We can read the Scripture passages further as well. We can also see how God is working, showing us His love, if we have the eyes of faith to see them. God sent the shepherds into Mary's life; who does God send into our lives?

As we approach the altar, we acknowledge that the Lord Jesus has given us so many good things. The Lord Jesus has given us His Mother to be our spiritual mother. We also imitate her example of keeping the Word of God in our hearts. If we listen to the Word of God, not just hearing the Word but making the Word part of ourselves, then the seed of faith can grow and we can grow in our sense of wonder and joy just as Mary did.